



## Today's manufactured housing communities aren't what you think

When you hear about manufactured housing communities, you probably picture a trailer park alongside the highway. Despite what you might think, manufactured homes aren't mobile, and they look nothing like what you're imagining.

The term manufactured home describes houses built entirely in factories after 1976, when HUD established the Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards. Unlike mobile homes built decades ago, manufactured homes span all demographics and provide a high-quality but affordable alternative to site-built homes.



According to the Manufactured Housing Institute, 22 million people in the United States live in manufactured homes. There are approximately 8.5 million manufactured homes in about 40,000 manufactured housing communities throughout the country. Over the past five years, the manufactured home share of single-family homes has increased compared to site-built homes across the country.

Recently, states like Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia have seen sizeable increases in the number of manufactured houses built and sold. In fact, it's estimated that one in every five homes sold in Florida is factory built.

Why are manufactured houses growing in popularity? For many homebuyers, a manufactured home provides an opportunity to live in a high-end community without sacrificing suburban amenities, like backyards, swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, and even boat ramps. They offer a number of advantages, including not only affordability, but also low maintenance, superior quality control and increased safety.

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### Affordability

Because manufactured homes are built in a controlled, streamlined factory environment, material costs are lower overall. Builders don't have to worry about weather-related damage and can often buy materials in bulk. As a result, manufactured homes can cost up to 50% less to build. While a site-built home costs an average of \$114 per square foot, a manufactured home costs an average of \$55 per square foot.

In August of 2020, the average price of a manufactured house was \$88,200; the median price of a new site-built house was \$325,500.

There can be additional costs of owning a manufactured home, including the cost of the land and customizations, but that price difference is still significant.

While manufactured housing is seen as a possible solution to the country's affordable housing crisis, not all manufactured homes are cheap. Across the country, particularly in coastal towns, there are luxury manufactured communities where factory-built homes may cost more than the national average family dwelling. While costs range depending on location, manufactured homes provide an affordable way for people to purchase a single-family dwelling in a desirable area.

That makes them ideal for millennials and Gen Z homebuyers, who have less buying power than their parents did at their stage of life. They also provide an excellent option for seniors looking to downsize while maintaining the features they love about their detached homes.

### Excellent quality control

Manufactured homes undergo frequent rigorous inspections and are subject to standards put in place by the US Department of Housing and

Urban Development. HUD created the Office of Manufactured Housing Programs for the sole purpose of overseeing construction standards and providing consumers with resources for preserving their homes.

Since those standards have been put in place, the quality of factory-built homes has improved tremendously. There are compliance standards for structural integrity as well as energy efficiency, fire and wind resistance, ventilation, plumbing and heating and air.

### Safer in hurricanes

Thanks to HUD standards, the safety of manufactured homes has come a long way. Manufactured homes are now built for specific wind zones, with the capability of withstanding hurricane-force winds. A 2014 IBHS test found that manufactured homes actually perform better in high winds than site-built houses when attached structures are properly installed.

### Fire resistance

While mobile homes are notorious for burning quickly when a housefire occurs, manufactured homes are much safer. From 2007 to 2011, the death rate as a result of fire for manufactured homes was 57% lower than in pre-1976 factory-built homes. The HUD codes introduced in 1976 include a number of fire-resistant features, including strict standards for flame spread and smoke generation. As a result, manufactured homes have 38% to 44% fewer fires than site-built homes, and the flame damage from fires in manufactured homes is more likely to be contained within the room of origin than in site-built homes.

